

A Recruitment Proposal for Macomb Township Fire Department

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Macomb Township, Michigan

Executive Development

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*Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.*

### CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Abstract

Despite back-to-back repeated recent hiring campaigns, Macomb Township Fire Department was still short of its staffing goal. The purpose of this research paper was to evaluate the current method of recruiting paid-on-call firefighters used by Macomb Township Fire Department and to identify alternative methods. An Action Research Method was used resulting in a recruitment proposal by collecting data on the current recruiting methods of Macomb Township Fire Department, identifying current standards/guidelines and researching recruitment methods of departments with similar demographics by using interviews, questionnaires, internet searches and literature review. Based on the research, it was realized that numerous factors affect recruiting. It is much more than just placing an ad.

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## Introduction

Recruiting for volunteer, paid-on-call, and part-paid departments remain a top challenge, Scott et al. (2004). “Recruiting and retaining quality personnel continues to be the most important element in the overall success of a volunteer or combination fire department.”

Despite back-to-back repeated recent hiring campaigns, Macomb Township Fire Department is still short of its staffing goal set by the chief of 100 personnel in the department (25 personnel at each of the 4 current stations).

Albert Einstein once said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.” An improvement in the way Macomb Township recruits or an entirely different method must be employed to get a different result.

The research problem is that Macomb Township Fire Department has been unsuccessful in meeting their staffing and emergency response goals with the current recruiting method to adequately staff each station with a sufficient compliment of paid-on-call firefighters to reliably respond to calls 24 hours a day - seven days a week.

The purpose of this research paper is to evaluate the current method of recruiting of paid-on-call firefighters used by Macomb Township Fire Department and to identify alternative methods.

The research questions to be answered are:

1. What recent methods has Macomb Township Fire Department used to recruit paid-on-call firefighters?
2. What types of recruiting methods are other fire departments with similar demographics using?
3. What standards/guidelines exist that are focused on the recruitment of paid-on-call firefighters?

An Action Research Method will be used resulting in a recruitment proposal by collecting data on the current recruiting methods of Macomb Township Fire Department, identifying current standards/guidelines and researching recruitment methods of departments with similar demographics by using interviews, questionnaires and literature review.

### Background and Significance

The Macomb Township Fire Department provides fire, rescue, and emergency medical response (non-transport) to an area of 36 square miles in Macomb County, Michigan. Macomb Township is a suburb of Detroit approximately 35 miles to the north. The area consists of residential, farming, rural, commercial, manufacturing, and light industrial complexes. There are three high schools, three middle schools, and 12 elementary and pre-schools. Approximately 30% of the population are age 17 and under with approximately 10% being under the age of five. The age group of 65+ makes up about 9% of the population. It is anticipated that they will make up 20% of the population by 2030. There are three medical facilities, nine group homes, and three modular/mobile home parks. According to the 2000 U.S. Census the community has 17,922 housing units. Of these, 4,331 units (24%) are considered higher life safety risk housing because they are either mobile homes or attached condominiums and apartments. Macomb Township is a rapidly growing community. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the population was 22,714. In 2000, the population rose to 50,478. Currently the population is approximately 78,000.

The Macomb Township Fire Department was first chartered June 1, 1953 as an all volunteer department. Station 1 had been erected in 1952 on 23 Mile Road,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile east of Romeo Plank Road. This station placement is almost exactly in the center of Macomb Township.

Prior to the formation of the department, fire and emergency calls were answered by Mount Clemens Fire Department. Mount Clemens' lone fire station is 9 miles away to the south. It was possible for this neighboring community to have response distances of 15 miles to service Macomb Township's northernmost boundaries.

This became unacceptable to the Macomb Township Board of Trustees. So, the department was born with 18 members (See Appendix A). Early recruiting into the department was done by word of mouth. The department remained an all volunteer department until 1969 when Joseph Koss became the first full-time chief. Official recruiting remained almost non-existent from 1969 to 2003. The members of the department would inform family or friends about the opportunity of becoming a firefighter for the department. These interested recruits would walk-in and get an application. Other recruits who were not told of the opportunities had to walk-in and put in an application without knowing if there was a need for firefighters at that time or if they would ever be called in the future. During this time period the number of paid-on-call personnel on the department was thought to be sufficient for the number of calls. The chief of the department tried to keep about 35 – 40 members on the department. No additional recruiting was thought to be needed. (R. Koss, personal communication, September 2007)

Two additional full-time employees were hired in 1973 and 1975. These employees worked a Monday through Friday, 40 hours per week, daytime shift. (D. Myny, personal communication, September 2007)

The Human Resources Department for Macomb Township was formed in September, 2003. Prior to Human Resources, these activities were conducted by the Finance Supervisor Manager with the direction of the Macomb Township Board of Trustees. The new Human Resources



Director, John Brogowicz, looked to duplicate the activities of civil service in Macomb Township without actually having a civil service board.

Initial recruiting for paid-on-call firefighters was started by first obtaining a list of job requirements from former Chief Raymond Ahonen. From that information a job posting was created February 16, 2004. This new job posting was advertised in the Macomb Daily, on the Township's cable channel and word of mouth.

Six additional full-time employees were hired in 2005 and 2007. Five of the six full-time employees work a 40 hours per week daytime shift staggered between the hours of 6:00 AM and 5:30 PM. The remaining full-time employee works between the hours of 4:30 PM and 1:30 AM. All of the full-time employees work Monday through Friday, no weekends or holidays.

Between February 2004 and August 2007 Macomb Township recruited with job postings for paid-on-call firefighters 7 times. The February 2004 recruitment was done to fill for attrition. The March 2006 recruitment was primarily done to fill the new Station 4 that was due to open in April. The August 2006 recruitment was aimed at filling Stations 3 and 4. The January, February, June and July 2007 recruitments were primarily done to increase the total numbers in the department (See Appendix B). The same procedure of advertising in the Macomb Daily, on the Township's cable channel and word of mouth has been used for these recruitment efforts as well.

Why is this a problem? Current Chief Robert Phillips, EFO has deemed that to run efficiently, the department needs to have 100 members with 25 members assigned to each station. This figure was derived in the following manner: The current collective bargaining agreement between Macomb Township and Michigan Association of Firefighters representing Macomb Township Firefighters Association states that firefighters must respond to 30% of the runs in

their assigned primary district and shift for which they are available (See Appendix C). If 30% of the proposed 25 firefighters assigned to a station respond to a toned-out call, 7 or 8 firefighters ( $25 \times .30 = 7.5$ ) would be available. The Chief deemed this number sufficient to handle 90% of one station response calls.

A goal of the Executive Development course of the Executive Fire Officer Program is to develop the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) into the type of leader that can first recognize a problem, and then become an agent for change. It is the responsibility of the EFO to do so.

A few signals of serious problems that require attention or change would be:

- Missed calls (calls going unanswered)
- Calls needing to be re-toned
- Extended response times
- Officers filling lower operational positions - staffing shortages that result in the fire chief driving the fire truck or fulfilling the responsibilities of other line firefighters, Scott et al. (2005).

If the problem Macomb Township Fire Department has with recruiting is left unchecked, it can and will cause the department to not be able to fulfill one of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) Operational Objective – To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues.

In January 2007, the Macomb Township Board of Trustees voted to add 20 additional firefighters to the current roster. Macomb Township Fire Department has had four separate back-to-back hiring campaigns with the idea of raising the personnel total by 20 members. These campaigns resulted in 8 additional personnel as of September 1, 2007. During the process, pre-application requirements were changed to “... raise the bar higher” according to Brogowicz. Another change was made in the hopes to recruit more applicants. This was to allow applicants

who did not already have both their Firefighter I and II and Emergency Medical Technician – Basic certifications (See Appendix B). These certifications must be obtained at the applicant's expense within 18 months. These “pre-certified” employees were titled “Recruits” and are covered in the current collective bargaining agreement between Macomb Township and Michigan Association of Firefighters representing Macomb Township Firefighters Association (See Appendix D).

Chief Phillips has stated that quality is more important than the quantity. Even though Firefighter I and II and Emergency Medical Technician – Basic certifications are now allowed to be acquired after hiring, a designed effort is made to seek out and promote applicants who display high moral characteristics along with mature and responsible traits. He states that there are more important aspects to being a good firefighter than certifications. There are aspects of the job that can be taught, and there are others that cannot – they just have to be a part of the make-up of that person. Southwest Airlines has built their corporate culture predicated on the concept – Hire for attitude, train for skills.

Brogowicz stated that placing individuals on the department roster without giving strong consideration to the character of the individual just to make up for a personnel shortage is reckless. These individuals can be disruptive and destructive to the whole department and cost far more than they are worth. For this reason he is in favor of the current hiring process that includes a background check, written test, physical agility test, oral interview and psychological evaluation.

It is generally regarded that tests are good tools to screen out candidates that may be too physically and/or mentally unhealthy to perform the duties required of them safely. Tests may also screen out those who would be unable to pass the rigors of fire or EMS classes.

Not everyone is suited to be a firefighter and a part of emergency services. Yet with the various needs of the service, many can find productive roles (Federal Emergency Management Association [FEMA], 2007).

The last hiring campaign resulted in only three new firefighters out of the ten applications that advanced to step two. This shortage of being able to recruit suitable personnel can become more and more of a problem because the community continues to grow in population with the building of brand new homes and subdivisions. However, this population growth has not resulted in the same percentage hike of interested applicants. This may be due in part that the new homes being built in Macomb Township are unaffordable to the target audience of potential paid-on-call firefighters.

Many affluent areas across the country struggle to recruit and retain volunteer and paid-on-call firefighters because the fire service has typically drawn a large number of members from the blue-collar ranks. The rate of decline in the number of people who are normally interested in volunteer or paid-on-call firefighting is often inversely proportional to the increase in housing costs. Younger, first-time home buyers and blue-collar workers generally cannot afford to buy or live in the new homes being built in Macomb Township. So, they choose to move to areas that are more affordable, Bush, Schaenman, and Thiel (1998).

### Literature Review

The best recruiting plan is a high retention rate, Scott et al. (2006). Also, if a department does a better job retaining their firefighters, it reduces the need to recruit new ones.

Some successful departments have complete marketing divisions to attract new members. They use attractive brochures, membership benefits and incentive programs, Scott et al. (2006).

There are many different ways to set up and implement incentive plans or systems. Generally ones that allow options, choices and are equitable when department members meet similar qualifying goals are more successful. Some of the incentives used across the country to recruit and retain volunteer and paid-on-call firefighters include:

- Direct monetary incentives (pay-per-call, length of service awards programs, tax breaks, personal health and life insurance, tuition assistance, gasoline cards, etc.)
- Indirect monetary incentives (passes to places of interest, physical fitness club memberships, food provided to those on standby duty at a station or at training (Wayne Township, IN - Fire Department), gifts for family members, trips to fire-related training conferences or even personal pleasure, scheduled family dinners at the fire stations)
- Vehicles (take-home fire department vehicles which can be utilized for personal business)
- Length of service pins or similar recognition (denoting number of years of service), Bush, Schaenman, and Thiel (1998).

#### Existing Standards/Guidelines that Focus on Recruiting

#### Barriers and Recognized Successful Ideas

One barrier that the fire service in general battles with is the inability or unwillingness to market their services and approach the fulfillment of their mission statements in a business-like manner. The fire service generally believes that they should not have to tell others about the good work they do because it should be obvious. This simply is not true. Leaders in the fire

service must realize that they are in competition for funds with other departments and local businesses. Taking a business marketing approach in the fire service is most important (Wilson, 2002).

Fire departments that make the mistake of waiting until the organization or funding is under attack before they began to toot their own horn run the risk of coming off as desperate whiners. This damages the department's integrity. Fire departments should make an effort to have good things said and written about their organization at least every month by cultivating relationships with the local media and politicians (FEMA, 2007). This also helps in recruiting. People want to be a part of a winning team. A well-marketed fire department attracts recruits. To market a department well, you have to be honest and specific about their time commitment and expectations.

## Training

The increased amount of training required may prove to be a barrier to recruiting. Some training is just mandatory and there is nothing that can be done to reduce the amount of time required. However, there are a few things departments can do to lessen the amount time or make the training required hours more appealing.

A realistic evaluation of the training needs of the department based on the hazards of the community should be done. The basics should be emphasized and specialized training made optional. Also, back-to-back training lessons should be done with the same class being taught in the morning, evening, and/or weekend of the same week. This will allow differing schedules to be available for the same training at the same time.

Eliminate the requirement for members to be trained and or certified in courses they do not necessarily need. Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) members on the department who do not fight fires should be allowed to be excluded from firefighting training and vice-versa. Line firefighters should not be required to reach the same level of training as officers, Scott et al. (2005).

Nontraditional educational methods such as online and DVD-driven classes should be employed that would allow members to meet required training standards at times more convenient to their schedule. Also, provide the training schedule well in advance so department members can plan for it. If it is at all possible, avoid training during times that a large percentage of your members will be otherwise engaged in recreational activities such as holiday weekends, hunting season, major sporting events, etc.

### Cliques and Moral

Cliques that form in volunteer and paid-on-call department can damage morale, affect teamwork, damage retention and hurt recruitment. No one wants to be a part of something that makes them feel as they don't belong. Cliques can create situations where their bonds keep other people from enjoying true camaraderie and friendships. Department leaders should encourage the intermixing of different members to help people get to know everyone better.

Moral in a department is likely to drop if poor performers (including officers) are retained for too long. Failing to correct poor performance will bring down department moral because members will think that a job done well is not valued, Scott et al. (2006).

## Recruiting Women and Minorities

It is important to realize that a “one-size-fit-all” approach to recruiting may not be successful in recruiting women and minorities. All recruits must be treated equally and fairly. However, female and minority members may feel more alienated than the average new member. Care must be taken that there are open channels of communication so that they have a forum to discuss potential problems. Sexist and/or racist humor has no place in today’s professional society. It must be made crystal clear that inappropriate words or actions will not be tolerated, Bush et al. (1998). The “good old boys social club” attitude and the “family and friends recruitment/hiring” practices hurt overall recruitment. Just saying that these practices and attitudes do not exist anymore may not be enough. It may be necessary to show that these long-time exclusionary actions are a thing of the past by doing such things as:

- Have female or minority members of the department speak to potential recruits
- Promote positive images of the department’s acceptance and fair treatment of its members and have formal written policies and grievance procedures protecting against sexual harassment and discrimination
- Place pictures of minority and female firefighters in recruitment flyers, advertisements, etc.

Show diversity in all your advertisements, recruiting information, websites, study guides and other materials. Go beyond simply stating an Equal Opportunity message. Studies have found that showing diversity and talking about values increases positive perceptions that minorities and women hold about an organization without creating negative perceptions in white men, Fox, Hardin, Hornick (2006).



### Additional Cultural Challenges

Keep in mind that in some cultures, people who wear a badge are thought of as a menace or corrupt. They may distrust the fire department and do not want their children or family members involved. It may prove to be challenging from a recruitment stand point, Bush et al. (1998).

### EMS Calls

Many of the nation's volunteers, part-paid, and paid-on-call firefighters are coming to a breaking point because they are being overworked and overused having to respond to too many EMS calls. Far too often, the caller for help is looking to get a free ride or to eliminate having to wait in a hospital waiting room (Thompson, 2005).

This problem has been approached using diversification strategies. This requires department leaders to acknowledge that not everyone is equal in skills and abilities essentially, not everyone in the department has to be proficient in all the jobs in the department. Recruit subject-matter experts for the different jobs. For example: hazardous materials experts for chemical emergencies, health care professionals for EMS calls, education professionals for public education, etc., Scott et al. (2005).

### Residency Requirements

Another barrier facing many fire departments is the residency requirements in their bylaws that exclude people who do not live in the community. This may be a problem to a department where the housing is expensive. Fire department should eliminate residency requirements. Outsiders, especially those who work in the community may be available for daytime calls.

Others may not be able to respond from home because of the distance, but they may be able to meet their obligation with day time duty work (FEMA, 2007).

### Procedures

An action research methodology process was used to conduct the research. The first part of the research process began with a literature examination of materials at the Learning Research Center at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland in March 2007. At the time of that literature examination, the research problem and questions were different. The online catalog was used to search for books, journals, reports, magazines, and numerous internet searches on the broader topic of recruiting, hiring and retaining paid-on-call firefighters. “How to Recruit, Hire and Retain Paid-on-Call Fire Fighters for Macomb Township” was the original title. This research proposal was initially submitted for review. It received a “Conditional” acceptance. A decision was made later that attempting to properly address this research problem would take much longer than the six month time limit given. It was decided that solely addressing the recruiting problem of the Macomb Township Fire Department would be better. The problem statement and questions were rewritten.

An additional literature examination of the aforementioned material was done focusing on recruitment. Additional information was obtained from the United States Fire Administration and additional internet search were done on various search engines. Keyword searches were done using: recruiting paid-on-call fire fighters, recruiting volunteer firefighters, recruiting firefighters, recruiting women and minorities for the fire service, recruiting and retaining fire service and different combinations of these words. This research project was done in part with

three different questionnaires. Two of the questionnaires were designed to primarily gather the opinions and feelings of the participants (Questionnaire 1 and 2). The third survey was designed to primarily gather statistical information for comparison purposes (Questionnaire 3).

As an assignment in Executive Development in the Executive Officer's Program at the National Fire Academy, class participants were given a stack of 35 cards by Howard Cross. Cross (personal communication, September, 2007) called these cards "Value Cards."

On one side of the card was a human value or personality trait. The other side of the card had a definition of that particular human value or trait as it pertained to the exercise. In the exercise, the participants were instructed to choose five of these values that best described themselves. The participants were allowed to write-in additional values or traits if one or more of their favorites were not represented. After this step was completed, the participants were asked to systematically remove one card after another until each had only one left. Six individuals were then asked to come to a consensus leaving each group represented by only three cards.

Questionnaire 1 (See Appendix E, F) was created using that assignment and those Value Cards. In Questionnaire 1 participants are asked to use the information taken from the Value Cards to choose their individual top five value traits while keeping in mind this question: Which of these values are most important for a new firefighter to have? Participants in the questionnaire were allowed to write in additional values as long as they provided a definition of the meaning of their new value.

This questionnaire was given to upper management fire officials, firefighters of differing rank, years of service, and departments. It was also given to individuals who worked in human resources or were responsible for hiring and citizen tax-payers. These questionnaires were hand-delivered, mailed, and e-mailed to an eventual total of 54 individuals. The individuals selected

were personal acquaintances, unknown visitors to the fire station, firefighters of Macomb Township and neighboring departments. It was also added as an attachment to Questionnaire 3. The hand-delivered and mailed questionnaire respondents were given the option of returning the completed questionnaire in a pre-paid postage envelope or in person. The ones that were e-mailed were sent in a Word document and could be returned in the same manner.

The questionnaire asked the respondent to complete and return the questionnaire within a specified time. Initially 20 questionnaires were sent out, 6 were returned within the time frame. Additional questionnaires continued to be sent out to different people with the dates changed - giving the respondents differing amount of time to reply.

There was a desire to have the same number of participants in each group. Questionnaires continued to be sent out until an evaluation of the respondents revealed that there were five representatives from each of these groups:

- Fire administration and chief officers
- Firefighters with more than three years on the job
- Firefighters with less than three years in the job
- Human resources personnel
- Tax-paying citizens

The results were tabulated to show the top three “values” selected (by number of votes) for each of the groups above. Comparisons were drawn between the selections made by each group.

The information gathered in this questionnaire was used to help determine and target the most desired firefighter recruit candidates for Macomb Township.

Questionnaire 2 was an informal question about being a paid-on-call firefighter posed to 12 paid-on-call firefighters of Macomb Township of different stations, shifts, years of service and ages.

The question was simply:

“Why do you do it... for the love or money?”

To be sure that each respondent’s answer was not influenced by peer pressure, respondents were only asked when they were alone and had time to explain their answer if needed.

Questionnaire 3 (See Appendix G) was created and designed to answer Research Question 2, “What types of recruiting methods are other departments with similar demographics using?”

The questionnaire also asked the respondents about their satisfaction with their recruiting efforts and gather statistical information for comparison to Macomb Township. It was created using [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com) on August 2, 2007.

Questionnaire 3 was distributed by sending the following e-mail invitation letter. (See Appendix H)

From August 11 – 16, 2007, Yahoo Search Engine was used to word search: Volunteer Fire Departments in New York, Volunteer Fire Departments in Pennsylvania, Volunteer Fire Departments in Florida, Volunteer Fire Departments in Georgia, Volunteer Fire Departments in Michigan, Volunteer Fire Departments in Ohio, Volunteer Fire Departments in California and Volunteer Fire Departments in Washington. Fire departments that provided an e-mail address were selected at random. The states selected were to represent two from the East Coast, two from the South, two from the Midwest and two from the West Coast. It was the intent to collect e-mail

addresses from these fire department websites, etc. in each of the selected states and send each of them the Questionnaire 3 invitation letter via e-mail.

<u>State</u>	<u>Number of Questionnaire 3 Invitation Letters Sent</u>
New York	15
Pennsylvania	12
Florida	15
Georgia	11
Michigan	13
Ohio	15
California	10
Washington	9

Whenever it was possible, the invitation was sent to the chief of the department or a high ranking official. There were 17 who responded out of 100 sent. Since respondents did not have to provide their address, it was unknown which departments responded.

During their interviews in June 2007, 16 candidates for jobs as a paid-on-call firefighter for Macomb Township Fire Department were asked these three questions along with their other interview question:

1. What was the initial motivating factor that moved you to apply for a job as a paid-on-call firefighter?
2. Do you have a friend or family member that currently is, or was in the fire service?
3. How did you find out about the job opening?

The candidates were asked follow-up questions for question 1 in an attempt to assure their answer was truthful and not an attempt to “say the right thing” during a job interview. For example, if a candidate answered question one with, “...I enjoy doing things for my community...” They were asked for examples of their past or current community involvement. If they could not give examples, their response was not counted.

#### Interviews with Chief Robert Phillips

July and August 2007

Chief Phillips was selected because he is the chief of the department and knows the direction the department is going in. Chief Phillips was asked the following questions:

1. How many firefighters are needed on the department to run efficiently?
2. How did you come to this figure?
3. What things do you think need to be done to get to this figure?

#### Interview with John Brogowicz and Sharalyn Arft

September 5, 2007

Mr. Brogowicz and Mrs. Arft were asked to provide answers to questions relating to the past, present and future recruiting of firefighters for Macomb Township. They were to be used to provide information to be able to answer Research Question 1. “What recent methods has Macomb Township used to recruit paid-on-call firefighter?” They were told that the information gathered was to be used in an Applied Research Paper written for the National Fire Academy

Executive Officer's Program. The meeting took place in office of Mr. Brogowicz. The two of them were asked the following questions:

1. What recent methods has Macomb Township Fire Department used to recruit paid-on-call firefighters?
2. How did Macomb Township initially develop its recruitment and hiring process/procedures?
3. Has the recruitment and hiring process/procedures changed in the last five years? If yes, how?
4. When was Macomb Township Human Resources Department established?
5. What is the current step-by-step procedure in becoming a Macomb Township Firefighter?
6. What were the job postings for firefighter in the last five years?
7. How many hiring campaigns has there been since the inception of Human Resources?
8. What could Macomb Township Possible do to recruit better?

This interview took place in the office of Mr. Brogowicz and lasted approximately one hour. Notes were taken and used for later reference. Mrs. Arft provided copies of Macomb Township Fire Department job postings for paid-on-call firefighter between February 2004 and August 2007 on September 7, 2007.



Interview with Chief Bill Nelson of Troy Fire Department, Troy, Michigan

August 28, 2007

Chief Nelson returned a prior call placed to him on August 27, 2007. He was told that an Applied Research Paper was being written on the subject of recruiting paid-on-call firefighters for Macomb Township Fire Department. He was asked if he would answer questions on the subject because F.F. Nicholas Herzek of his department indicated that Troy Fire Department had unique ways of recruiting and retaining their members. The telephone interview with Chief Nelson lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interview with Chief Nelson will also help answer Research Question 2.

He was asked the following question:

1. What kind of special things does your department do to recruit new members?

The questions asked during the interview were ad-libbed and covered subjects such as:

The history of Troy Fire Department, the operation of the department, staffing levels, recruiting and retaining programs, etc.

Notes were taken throughout the interview. At the close of the interview, Chief Nelson agreed to send rules and regulations and agreements of Troy Fire Department to reviewed (See Appendix I).

Interviews with Capt. Richard Koss, Capt. David Myny and Sgt. John DeCook of Macomb Township Fire Department

June – September 2007

Various questions were asked of all three about the history of Macomb Township Fire Department.

Telephone Interview with Tom Miller, 8<sup>th</sup> District Vice-President International Association of Fire Fighters

September 6, 2007

Yahoo search engine was used with the keyword search: International Association of Fire Fighters (I.A.F.F.). The website [www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org) produced a telephone number in Washington D.C. The operator was told that a question requesting the Union's position on a subject needed to be answered. After verifying the state, the operator gave the phone number of Tom Miller. He was called and asked:

1. Has the I.A.F.F. softened its views on allowing its members to work at volunteer and paid-on-call fire departments in their home towns?

Sgt. David Nowak, Sara Buscaino, RMS Director, and Nancy Majors were asked via e-mail and telephone to assist in gathering historical and statistical information about Macomb Township Fire Department in August and September 2007.

#### Recruitment Brochure

The brochure was created using Microsoft Publisher and information interpreted from Questionnaire 1, 2, interviews and literature review. The photographs were taken by Claudette Ginter (See Appendix J).

### Script for Recruitment Commercial on Cable Television

“The Nature of the Business” A Picture of What It’s Like in the Fire Service (Anonymous, 2007) was first found in U.S. Fire Administration Retention and Recruiting for the Volunteer Emergency Services: Challenges and Solutions FA-310 / May 2007 on page 141. Using Yahoo Search Engine and typing: “A picture of what its like in the fire service.” The text was on the webpage at <http://www.evfire.org/volunteers/become/index.shtml>. The text was copied and pasted to this report. This text was then altered from its original form and content so it could be read as a script for members of Macomb Township Fire Department (See Appendixes K, L).

### Results

Research Question #1. What recent methods has Macomb Township Fire Department used to recruit paid-on-call firefighters? The research showed that Macomb Township has tried several recent new ideas to recruit more paid-on-call fire fighters. Since January 2007, the pre-application qualifications were changed with the idea of allowing more applicants the opportunity to apply. They dropped the requirement that applicants had to have both a Firefighter I and II and Emergency Medical Technician – Basic certificate prior to applying. These pre-certified applicants could be hired as a fire “Recruit.” This new position allows the recruit to attend training sessions and ride on the fire apparatus, but they are not allowed to drive, fight a fire or respond to a medical call until they are certified. Being hired by a department allows the “recruit” to have a reduced rate for the academy because they are now sponsored by a department.

Macomb Township also increased the number of times they normally accepted applications (twice per year) for paid-on-call fire fighter in an attempt to get more applicants.

Research Question #2. What types of recruiting methods are other fire departments with similar demographics using? A telephone interview was conducted with Chief Bill Nelson of Troy Fire Department, Troy, Michigan. Troy Fire department is a combination department with 13 full-time employees that work four 10 hour work days per week and 170 volunteer firefighters. The city of Troy, Michigan is another northern suburb of Detroit, Michigan with a population of 80,959 according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

The Troy Fire Department is thought of as unique because it has a predominantly volunteer force with such a large population. According to Chief Nelson, the full-time employees do not normally respond to the calls, only to the larger incidents or house fires. Troy Fire Department does not respond to medical calls. The city has contracted with a local ambulance company for this service. Troy Fire Department is thought of widely in the area as having an excellent firefighter recruiting program. Chief Nelson contends his system of recruiting is successful because he looked at recruitment and retention as similar challenges. So, Troy Fire Department recruits with the idea of retaining the candidate. According to him, the same things that make a person want to stay around are the same things that motivate them join in the first place. Also, unhappy firefighters bad-mouth the department and damage future recruitment efforts. He felt it was necessary to first understand what motivates a person to become and remain a volunteer, part-paid or paid-on-call firefighter to be successful in recruiting them.

He contended that some potential recruits have aspirations of becoming a full-time firefighter and want to use volunteer, part-paid and paid-on-call departments as a stepping-stone for experience, training and to boost their resume. There are also a number of potential recruits who

were mainly interested in the compensation received by being part-paid and paid-on-call. Since Troy Fire Department does not pay wages to their volunteers, this does not present itself as a challenge.

In Chief Nelson's opinion certain recruit prospects make better candidates for volunteer, part-paid or paid-on-call fire departments. He identified four reasons why they would want to do it.

The recruit is intrigued by:

1. The mystique of being a firefighter
2. The desire to do something for the community
3. Being with people with similar beliefs, values and interests
4. Wanting to be a part of something that is well-respected

Troy Fire Department makes an effort to look for these particular qualities in their candidates. Chief Nelson felt that these recruits are not motivated by money. They have a spirit of volunteering nature and would be volunteering somewhere else if they were not involved in the fire department.

Troy Fire Department offers incentive plans designed to retain firefighters. These plans are used as a recruiting tool for new firefighters. Chief Nelson suggested several things to help with the recruiting by keeping the ones you have happy.

- "Zone Tones" – Only tone out the station(s) that are required to respond to a call to avoid unneeded and unnecessary interruption to on-call firefighters. Firefighters had complained about having their sleep interrupted night after night with tones that were not

their responsibility. These sleep interruptions affected their work performance at their primary jobs.

- Do not use on-call firefighters for EMS calls if the department does not transport.
- If the department is a combination department, close any gaps between paid-on-call/volunteer and paid members.
- Be pro-active and creative in thinking of ways to recruit and retain firefighters.

Chief Nelson said that one way of keeping firefighters happy who are not doing the job strictly for the money is to give them something meaningful to do when you call them. He saw emergency medical service (EMS) calls as a deterrent to recruiting. A private EMS company handles all of those calls in their community. He stated that 80% of emergency calls are EMS calls. A volunteer or paid-on-call fire department's response to these calls quickly burn out firefighters who do the job for reasons other than money. He theorizes that fire departments that do not transport and are not the medical authority in their community do not affect the outcome of medical emergency calls 90% of the time. Firefighters are repeatedly interrupted at home and their other jobs to come to the station or respond to a call to do nothing. The added call volume paired with inactivity becomes a deterrent to recruiting additional firefighters. They simply do not have the time nor desire to commit to answering EMS calls. He said it was a lot to ask of someone with a family.

Some of the incentives used across the country to recruit and retain volunteer and paid-on-call firefighters include:

- Direct monetary incentives (pay-per-call, length of service awards programs, tax breaks, personal health and life insurance, tuition assistance)

- Indirect monetary incentives (passes to places of interest, physical fitness club memberships, food provided to those on standby duty at a station or at training (Wayne Township, IN - Fire Department), gifts for family members, trips to fire-related training conferences or even personal pleasure, scheduled family dinners at the fire stations)
- Vehicles (take-home fire department vehicles which can be utilized for personal business)
- Length of service pins or similar recognition (denoting number of years of service) Bush et al. (1998)

#### Recruiting Methods Used Around the Country Include:

- Place advertisements in local businesses, schools and churches
- Use requests that ask for fire trucks to block parties and similar public events as chances to recruit
- Have female firefighters visit local health clubs, college sports teams, etc. to attract interest from females
- Have a fire station open house and recruit visitors
- Advertise on billboards at key locations in the community (including the fire stations)
- Advertise recruiting message on the sides of all fire, EMS, and rescue vehicles
- Develop television and radio advertisement
- Housing assistance or residency programs
- Assistance with housing loans
- Local business discounts
- Passes to local sporting events
- Reduced rates or exemption from local utility bills or cable television

- Subscriptions to fire or EMS magazines
- Weekend use of a camping cabin (Troy, MI - Fire Department)
- Gift certificate drawing for members who attend meetings or training
- Permit use of station washer and dryer for personal use
- Provide an area for car maintenance at the station
- Award responders with a family get-away trip
- Create a citizen's academy, Explorers Group, Fire Corps organization, cadet program, etc. and recruit from them
- Create pamphlets, brochures, etc. that describe your department and needs, Bush et al. (1998)

In November of 2005, six area fire departments in Alaska got together and created a 30-second advertisement on recruiting volunteers. This ad campaign was shown before each film shown at Regal Cinemas with firefighters appearing in person to recruit on selected days.

Research Question #3. What standards/guidelines exist that are focused on the recruitment of paid-on-call firefighters? The research found that material on the recruitment of firefighters is generally focused on recruiting volunteer firefighters. This Table is one available source.



Retention and Recruitment Root Problems	
Sources of Problems	Contributing Factors
TIME DEMANDS	<p>the two-income family and working multiple jobs</p> <p>increased training time demands</p> <p>higher emergency call volume</p> <p>additional demands within department (fund raising, administrative)</p>
TRAINING REQUIREMENTS	<p>higher training standards and new federal requirements</p> <p>more time demands</p> <p>greater public expectation of fire department's response capabilities (broader range of services such as EMS, hazmat, technical rescue, etc.)</p> <p>additional training demands to provide broader range of services</p> <p>recertification demands</p>
INCREASING CALL VOLUME	<p>fire department assuming wider response roles (EMS, hazmat, technical rescue)</p> <p>increasing emergency medical call volume</p> <p>increase in number of automatic fire alarms</p> <p>greater reliance by public on fire department's services</p>
CHANGES IN THE "NATURE OF THE BUSINESS"	<p>abuse of emergency services by the public</p> <p>less of an emphasis on social aspects of volunteering</p>
CHANGES IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS (IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN AREAS)	<p>transience</p> <p>loss of community feeling</p> <p>less community pride</p> <p>less of an interest or time for volunteering</p> <p>two-income family and time demands</p>

	“me” generation
CHANGES IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS (IN RURAL AREAS)	employers less willing to let employees off to run calls  time demands  “me” generation
LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS	poor leadership and lack of coordination  authoritative management style  failure to manage change
FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS	Fair Labor Standards Act interpretation  “2-in, 2-out” OSHA ruling requiring four firefighters on scene before entering hazardous environment  Environmental Protection Agency live-fire burn limitations
INCREASING USE OF COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS	disagreements among chiefs or other department leaders  friction between volunteer and career members
HIGHER COST OF HOUSING (IN AFFLUENT COMMUNITIES)	volunteers cannot afford to live in the community they serve
AGING COMMUNITIES	greater number of older people today  lack of economic growth and jobs in some towns

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1998

### Another Guideline for Recruiting

One barrier that the fire service in general battles with is the inability or unwillingness to market their services and approach the fulfillment of their mission statements in a business-like manner. The fire service generally believes that they should not have to tell others about the good work they do because it should be obvious. This simply is not true. Leaders in the fire service must realize that they are in competition for funds with other departments and local businesses. Taking a business marketing approach in the fire service is most important (Wilson, 2002).

### The Results of Questionnaire 1

The Overall Test Group's Top Five (in ranked order with number of votes)

1. PROFESSIONALISM	19
2. RESPONSIBILITY	14
3. COOPERATION	13
4. INTEGRITY	12
5. HONESTY	10

Other choices receiving votes:

Health 8, Morality 7, Knowledge 6, Dedication 6, Sensitivity 5, Work 4, Wisdom 4, Loyalty 4, Creativity 3, Trustworthiness 3, Openness 1, Love 1, Success 1, Patience 1, Helpfulness 1, Power 1, Composure (write-in) 1

Command Staff's Top Three

1. PROFESSIONALISM
2. DEDICATION
3. MORALITY

Firefighter's (More than 3 years on the job) Top Three

1. PROFESSIONALISM

2. RESPONSIBILITY
3. COOPERATION

Firefighter's (3 or less years on the job) Top Three

1. PROFESSIONALISM
2. COOPERATION
3. RESPONSIBILITY

Human Resources Specialist's Top Three

1. PROFESSIONALISM
2. INTEGRITY
3. HONESTY

Citizen / Tax Payer's top three

1. RESPONSIBILITY
2. COOPERATION and PROFESSIONALISM (tie)

The Results of Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 2 was an informal question about being a paid-on-call firefighter posed to 12 paid-on-call firefighters of Macomb Township of different stations, shifts, years of service and ages.

The question was simply:

“Why do you do it... for the love or money?”

To be sure that each respondent's answer was not influenced by peer pressure, respondents were only asked when they were alone and had time to explain their answer if needed.

Love	Money	Equal
10	1	1

During their interviews in June 2007, 16 candidates for jobs as a paid-on-call firefighter for Macomb Township Fire Department were asked these three questions along with their other interview question:

1. What was the initial motivating factor that moved you to apply for a job as a paid-on-call firefighter?
2. Do you have a friend or family member that currently is, or was in the fire service?
3. How did you find out about the job opening?

Several candidates gave more than one answer to question 1.

#### Responses to Question 1

Response Category	Candidate(s)
Stepping stone to a full-time position or resume builder	1, 2, 4, 10, 13, 15
Thrill or excitement	1, 2, 10
Community service	1, 2, 11
Love for the job	6, 7, 11
To gain respect	3, 5
Money	14, 16
No response (Did not know)	8, 9, 10

#### Responses to Question 2

Yes	1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16
No	2, 3, 7, 14

#### Responses to Question 3

Macomb Township Website	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13
Newspaper	7, 14
Fire Academy	10, 16

Current Firefighter	8, 11
Non-firefighter acquaintance	3, 15
No response	9

### The Results of Questionnaire 3

Because of the low percentage (< 17%) of respondents to Questionnaire 3, the information gathered was not used. (See Appendix L)

## Discussion

It is interesting to note that recruiting and retention are linked and almost inseparable. If a department does a better job retaining their firefighters, it reduces the need to recruit new ones.

The question is: Are part-paid and paid-on-call firefighters motivated to do the job for the love or for the money? Twelve of Macomb Township Fire Department's paid-on-call firefighters, with more than three years on the job, were asked the following question: Do you do it more out of love, or more for the money? Ten out of the 12 stated they did it out of love. One said it was equal and one said it was slightly more because of the money. One respondent said, "I can make more money working for my brother, so I do this for the love of the job."

Sgt. John DeCook on Macomb Township Fire Department echoed a similar sentiment about the pay he received when he was a paid-on-call firefighter. He stated, "The money was just a way of keeping score." (DeCook, personal communication, August, 2007)

The department is not unlike many fire departments. There is a political culture and union concerns. It is important to note that some proposals may have to be negotiated prior to implementation.

Based on the research and making a first hand comparison, here are possible recruitment barriers and challenges faced by Macomb Township Fire Department:

#### Time Demands of a Paid-on-Call Firefighter

Required to respond to at least 30% of their station calls during their chosen shift (0600 – 1800 hours or 1800 to 0600 hours).

Required to attend at least 21 of the first 32 training/business meetings of the contractual year (July 1 to June 30).

Required to complete 9 out of 12 monthly truck/medical bag checks of the contractual year. (See Appendix C)

#### Training Requirements

Training/business meetings sessions are held the first 4 weeks of the month on Mondays from 1900 to 2100 hours or on Tuesdays from 0900 – 1100 hours.

#### Call Volume

##### Macomb Township Fire Department Emergency Calls

YEAR	TOTAL EMERGENCY CALLS
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2005	2,904
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2006 2,821

2007 1,968 (As of September 1)

Macomb Township Fire Department is an Emergency Medical Service (Non-transport) response department. Approximately 76.3% of emergency calls in 2006 were considered “Medicals.” (2,152 EMS Calls)

There was a discussion that possibly Macomb Township could take advantage of resident firefighters who work for full-time departments in other communities. It was suggested by Brogowicz that this source of possible recruits may be an option boost membership totals for Macomb Township and that the International Association of Firefighters (I.A.F.F.) may have soften its stance against allowing their union members to work at paid-on-call or volunteer fire departments. “That is absolutely not the truth,” replied Tom Miller, 8<sup>th</sup> district vice-president of the I.A.F.F. He stated that if any of their members were found to be working at a non-I.A.F.F. fire department, charges could be brought against the firefighter up to disbarment from the union (Miller, personal communication, September 5, 2007).

An effective recruitment plan for Macomb Township must first begin with assessing the needs of the community and fire department. Chiefs of small departments often can keep track of personnel needs in their heads. However, if recruiting becomes more difficult and firefighter standards become stricter, departments should consider a more formal way of assessing their needs. One question that needs to be asked and answered is: How is the community developing and where is it headed? (FEMA, 2007). Chief Phillips has already done this and assessed the needs of the fire department to be 25 personnel at each station. As of September 1, 2007, each station has the following paid-on-call personnel:



	Number of Personnel	Day Time Available
Station 1	13	1
Station 2	21	5
Station 3	19	3
Station 4	13	5

The second step is to determine the criteria for selection (FEMA, 2007). Chief Phillips and Human Resources has established this with the most recent job posting. (See Appendix B)

In the results of Questionnaire 1, all groups identified professionalism as being very important. In this questionnaire professionalism was defined as: Commitment to quality, pride in your work. This definition may be summed up as “Caring about what you do.” Since Chief Phillips and John Brogowicz are attempting to mimic Southwest Airline’s ideology of Hire for attitude, train for skills, candidates who exhibit the trait described above should be ideal.

Third, determine who should do the recruiting and where to look. Some departments use everyone in the department as recruiters since the majority of new members come from direct referrals; others select a few members to run the process. Regardless of which way it is done, all members should be given a recruitment handbook, flyer, brochure, etc. and the knowledge of how to answer routine questions that prospective recruits might ask. If Macomb Township Fire Department’s goal is recruiting to fill daytime positions it should consider looking at local gyms, colleges, and people who are self-employed. Another source for daytime recruits used by some communities is to use employees of local government like the public works department. There are also women and minorities on Macomb Township Fire Department that can assist with recruiting the same.

Fourth, advertise and begin the established process (FEMA, 2007).

The state of a fire department is not so much what the firefighters want, but rather what the community wants. This is driven by population, community values, response workload, and the ability and willingness to pay. Combination departments are those that are transitioning from one economic and social condition to another, Coleman (2005). For example, Macomb Township's population was approximately 22,700 in 1990. Today it is over 78,000. There has been a steady transformation from a farming community to a large suburban city. Consideration should be given to remaining a combination fire department but hire additional full time firefighters for better coverage. Troy Fire Department was selected as a good department to interview for recruitment ideas. The city of Troy has a population of 80,959 (2000 U.S. Census) and a volunteer fire department. Troy's ISO rating is 3. The hope was to gather information on how and why Troy Fire Department is successful as a volunteer fire department while so many other departments cannot do so in a community with a similar population.

Based on the research, it was realized that numerous factors affect recruiting. It is more than just placing an ad.

### Recommendations

Macomb Township Fire Department needs to become more efficient in recruiting new members. The department should start immediately with this Recruitment Proposal A in conjunction with a hiring campaign. Recruitment Proposal A does not require substantial changes to the union contracts, operating procedures and/or rules of the department.

Recruitment Proposal A

- Create a brochure and a poster based from the brochure (See Appendix J)
- These brochures and posters should be distributed to the public and local businesses.  
Target citizens who are self employed and new to the community.
- Encourage the women and minorities in the department to become more active recruiters.  
Make it easy for them and support their efforts.
- Create a recruitment video (See Appendix K)  
This video should be a part of the normal rotation on the local cable station.  
Consideration should be given to the time of day it is aired to maximize its effectiveness.
- Begin daytime face-to-face recruiting in local health clubs, gyms and local businesses.
- Target citizens that are available during the day.
- Begin recruiting at local high schools, colleges, and places of worship.
- Recruit for both the regular fire department and Fire Corps.
- Place recruitment advertisement at all of the stations. Take advantage of the drive-by traffic with an electronic sign.

Evaluate the effectiveness of this recruitment proposal after six months. If there is no noticeable rise in the number and quality of applicants, consider ideas from Recruitment Proposal B.

## Recruitment Proposal B

- Have different tones for each station call. This may require having department dispatch.
- Discontinue EMS calls entirely for paid-on-call
- Hire EMS response-only employees
- Only respond to life-threatening calls
- Hire addition paid-on-call firefighters from outside of the community boundaries to work in-station during the day
- Hire additional full-time employees
- Indirect monetary incentives (passes to places of interest, physical fitness club memberships, food provided to those on standby duty at a station or at training, gifts for family members, trips to fire-related training conferences or even personal pleasure, scheduled family dinners at the fire stations)
- Housing assistance or residency programs
- Assistance with housing loans
- Local business discounts
- Passes to local sporting events
- Reduced rates or exemption from local utility bills or cable television
- Subscriptions to fire or EMS magazines
- Gift certificate drawing for members who attend meetings or training
- Gasoline reimbursements to top performers

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